

House Bill 62
March 5, 2009
Presented by Chris Smith
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Deputy Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in support of HB 62 that requires FWP to implement a trapper safety and education course for first time trappers 12 years of age or older.

FWP believes that a mandatory trapper safety and education course is a proactive step in addressing some of the issues surrounding trapping.

Currently, the Montana Trappers Association conducts a voluntary trapper education program in cooperation with FWP. The Department's support for mandatory trapper education is an acknowledgement of the quality of the current program and recognizes the value of education for all new trappers. Similar to mandatory hunter education and bow hunter education, HB 62 would bring trapping in line with these programs and build upon an existing voluntary program.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has a state of the art model trapper safety and education curriculum that states like Montana can utilize to meet their specific needs. FWP has met with the leadership of the two trapping organizations in Montana and have agreed on how to best structure and deliver a similar program in Montana. This standardization would allow a trapper certified in Montana to be recognized by other states and provinces as having received trapper education. This is the same level of recognition that the hunter safety and bow hunter safety education programs enjoy.